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AUTHOR Godbold, Donald H.
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ABSTRACT

Community colleges face significant challenges posed by a period of financial austerity, educational cutbacks, and a questioning of the fundamental missions of the colleges. To deal with these challenges, the colleges should identify their target student populations, specify the colleges' goals, and tie the concept of open admissions into a process that would enhance the probability of student success. Three types of students should be targeted: degree or certificate students, who may be full- or part-time, transfer or vocational; special interest students attending for personal growth, skills upgrading or licensure; and casual students pursuing self-fulfillment or non-vocational personal goals. The attendance of these students should be subject to a contractual agreement with the college and to satisfactory progress. Additionally, the colleges must develop organizational structures that are streamlined, cost-effective, and efficient. To do so, they should: (1) develop high quality student service programs; (2) establish consortia with other institutions to share scarce resources; (3) develop occupational programs in conjunction with the private sector; (4) foster closer relationships with public and government agencies; (5) be responsive to changes in technology; (6) coordinate and administer community programs and services; and (7) create foundations to raise money for special purposes. Such changes will enable the colleges to progress and to provide access to students who need it most. (HB)

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Presented by:
Donald H. Godbold
Chancellor and District Superintendent
Peralta Community College District
Oakland, California

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OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRESS AND CHANGE IN A PERIOD OF ECONOMIC STRESS

There is no doubt that there is evidence to support the notion that community colleges are being closely scrutinized and their mission being challenged. This is occurring during a period of economic stress and fiscal austerity.

Breneman and Nelson state that there is tension between instructional mission and the financing of community colleges.[1] They predict that this tension will grow during the next two decades predicated on a 25% drop in the traditional college-age population and whether community colleges will be able to attract adult markets to the level of their expectations through efforts to provide programs of lifelong learning. Community colleges are particularly under scrutiny because of their present multi-faceted mission. In a climate of restrictive funding for education and increased scrutiny of the value of all publicly supported activities, they question the continued commitment to comprehensiveness, particularly related to such areas as community service and non-credit courses. They also question the efficacy of the transfer function.

They are supported in their concern about the transfer function by Alexander Astin, whose research indicates that in general students enrolled in community colleges whose aspirations are to pursue the baccalaureate degree have less chance of persisting towards that goal than those who go directly from high school to four-year institutions.

A more recent study by Astin primarily related to minorities in higher education also confirms this position. He states:

> "Community colleges have been less successful, however, in performing their transfer function. Our data indicate that whereas three in four community college freshmen intend to get the baccalaureate, only one in four actually does so. What makes the attrition problem especially severe is the heavy concentration of minority students in community colleges

> particularly in states like California and Texas that have a hierarchical, three-tier system of public higher education. Because many minority students do not meet the admissions requirements of four-year institutions, they are forced to enroll in community colleges. For some of these students, the community college's open door leads to a dead end. Moreover, many of those community college entrants who succeed in transferring to a senior institution find themselves as students with advanced standing but without the resources and services that are ordinarily available to entering freshman -- for example, financial aid and orientation."[2]

Another study by Dorothy Knoell[3] for the California Postsecondary Education Commission also questions the traditional mission of community colleges. Knoell identifies six major issues that confront community colleges in the 1980's:

1. Overcoming the myth of the "two year college." Students, many of whom already have degrees, can enroll without prohibition throughout their lifetime.

2. Rethinking open enrollment within open admission. There is a need to better implement the open-door admissions philosophy as it relates to student proficiency and their program and curriculum placement upon entering.

3. Improving articulation with secondary schools. The need exists to better identify the academic skills needed for college level work and improve programs of student preparation for postsecondary educational experiences.

4. Reconsidering student affirmative action. Should relatively scarce state resources be used for severely disadvantaged minorities as opposed to the disadvantaged who can be prepared for college and university work; and would disadvantaged minority students with academic potential for, and interest in, working towards the baccalaureate degree be better served as entering freshmen at four-year colleges?

5. Providing remediation. What level of remedial education should community colleges provide and to what extent should courses be adapted to the level of basic skills exhibited by students?

6. Assuring transfer. There has to be an increase in the number of students transferring to the four-year college and university and improvement in their competitiveness at the upper division level.

The Knoell study also makes reference to the economic payoff to vocational students in community colleges which is often cited as one of the advantages for enrolling. She refers to studies, the data from which although inconclusive, raise some question about the advantages of vocational training at community colleges by comparison to training received in high school and for persons with non-vocational college education.

Corollary to this situation is the competition between segments of higher education for students. The University of California at Berkeley, in the Fall of 1980, recorded the largest enrollment in its history. The reason given for the increase was the attraction of more first-year entering freshmen, either by student choice or recruitment, who ordinarily would have gone to the community college. The University of California at Berkeley is also offering a special admissions program for marginal students who need further preparation to compete successfully in college level programs. Ironically, the Peralta Community College District has collaborated with the University to provide the basic skills instruction needed by a segment of these students.

As proponents of the community college movement, we defend the traditional mission with the belief that what we do, we do well; that we are truly meeting student and community needs, and that we are providing equal access to education beyond high school. We cite the evidence of instructional flexibility, diversity of students of all ages, and increasing enrollments to document that position. However, all of the above studies seriously challenge that position which becomes particularly significant in a climate of economic stress and diminishing resources.

The above scenario and prevailing economic influences have signaled the need for a self-appraisal of our institutions and quality of our product, as well as what it is that we are about. It presents an opportunity to make the changes necessary for the enhancement and continued progress of community colleges and greater appreciation of their role as educational and training institutions. This can be accomplished while continuing to serve the function of providing access to education beyond high school. An elaboration on some of these opportunities would appear appropriate for this discussion.

Breneman and Nelson, Astin and Knoell, among others, have questioned both the quality of community colleges and the success of our students, especially minority students. The urban community colleges represent the major point of entry for minority students.

Forty percent of all students and 22.3 percent of minorities who enter college as first-time freshmen do so at community colleges. Minority students enrolled at community colleges also constitute 38.8 percent of the total undergraduate enrollment in higher education.[4] For this population of students, many of them are the first members of their families to attempt higher education and a substantial portion of them also suffer from some degree of economic disadvantage. The philosophy and mission of community colleges are of great importance to them.

I am an advocate of the open admissions policy, but I feel that the lack of supportive data has made its success questionable. In order to retain the concept of open admissions, we must tie it into a process that will enhance the probability of student success. To accomplish this end we need to do a better job of identifying our students and their goals.

I am proposing a model such as the following: (1) degree or certificate seeking student, full- or part-time basis, whether transfer or vocational; (2) special interest student, interested in personal growth and development, skills upgrading or licensure; and, (3) casual student pursuing self-fulfillment, or non-vocational personal needs. To go along with this identification scheme is the notion of a contractual agreement between student and institution at the time of admission.

A student, for instance, who declares himself to be a degree seeking student in an academic or vocational area, whether full- or part-time, would commit himself to the satisfactory completion of a prescribed curriculum or program, including the remedial or basic skills courses necessary for success. A condition of enrollment for such a student could require that before being allowed to take a fourth course, or enroll for a second term, he submit himself for a full assessment and diagnostic work-up and abide by any remedial needs prescribed. Students who do not progress satisfactorily towards their goal or fail to comply with the contractual agreement would be denied the opportunity to register until doing so or a program re-classification or adjustment is determined. Likewise, a certificate seeking student would agree to terms related to the attainment of the certificate. The agreement with the special interest student would be the attainment of the goal specified. The casual student would not be able to attain a degree or certificate unless there was a change in their designation. Students would be held to their course of study and could not change unless approved by their counselor or advisor. The intent here is their success and to establish standards for continuance in school. This contractual arrangement has proven successful for street academies as well as graduate

schools. An admissions arrangement of this type should prove instrumental in enhancing the transfer function and the success of students who tranfer to the four-year institutions. Student retention and success of the transfer function begs the need for structured curricula, appropriate student proficiency, strict standards of achievement, competent faculty, creative instruction, and a quality program of student assessment. The delineation of students would also allow greater attention to be focused on the transfer student and encourage more students to transfer, particularly from among minorities, than are presently doing so.

The philosophy of open admissions and student assessment have continually represented an insurmountable dilemma for community colleges. Student success in community colleges mandates that a program of admissions and student assessment be established with which students must comply for continued enrollment. The idea here is not to limit access conditioned upon assessment, but to support a manner by which access and assessment can take place. The above delineation of student and contractual agreement should provide this opportunity. The program of assessment, counseling and guidance must however, be comprehensive, sophisticated, professional, responsive to referrals and respected by students and faculty. The press of financial resources is forcing the Peralta District to examine ways to become more cost effective. We are presently planning to develop a central registrar's office for five colleges. Included in this project is also the development of a district assessment center to serve the purpose suggested above. A success oriented program of admissions should improve student success and allay much of the current concern about institutional quality.

Complementary to a successful assessment program must be a quality program of student services, particularly that which is typified as counseling. I have been outspoken about the need for better quality, more efficient and functional counseling programs than the usual "one counselor per 750 students" approach. There is a need for programs that provide a more "hands on" contact with students to interpret diagnostic information, prescribe courses of action, give advice, and assist students to sort out and examine options from which they can choose that have significance for their future well being. To accomplish these needs, I have been an advocate of the team approach to counseling. The team is comprised of a trained, certificated, master counselor, paraprofessional(s), and peers. Rather than fifteen counselors for 15,000 students, nine or ten teams of four persons at the same approximate cost as for fifteen counselors, will allow more "hands on" contact with students than under the present system. To work more effectively, students,

upon registration, will have to be assigned to a team. The students assigned will constitute that team's case load. Each team, guided by the master counselor, can develop intra-team specializations that could be effectively used by students assigned to it. It thus becomes the team's responsibility to develop an effective program of guidance and counseling for its students. During my tenure as Vice President and Chief Executive Officer of the Auraria Campus for the Community College of Denver, this model was effectively implemented and well appreciated at that institution. It can be developed on a cost effective basis and has proven effective in serving students.

Community Colleges must also improve their relationship and articulation with other segments in the educational hierarchy. No longer can we afford to "do our own thing." The competition for scarce resources requires that we join in consortia with secondary schools and four-year institutions in the delivery of educational services to the community. We must assist the secondary schools in the preparation of students for postsecondary education, whether at the community college level or the university. Likewise, we must collaborate with the four-year colleges and universities in the development of jointly sponsored programs for student success. Joint collaboration of faculty from secondary two- and four-year colleges on course content will serve to improve curricula and program articulation, as will the establishment at the community college of intra college committees or commissions to oversee the transfer function. Programs at both levels, (i.e.. secondary to community college and community college to four-year colleges and universities) can be those of concurrent enrollment, joint teaching arrangements and the sharing of resources ranging from student assessment and career guidance centers and facility usage, to the sharing of the variety of means for telecommunications access to the community. The Peralta District has a student managed cable TV station (PCTV). The station has its own dedicated channel and is on the air nine (9) hours per day, five (5) days a week. In cooperation with Oakland Public Schools, it can also cable cast on their Channel 13. PCTV is also cooperating with the University of California, Berkeley, in the sharing of Instructional Television Fixed Service (ITFS).

Community colleges are proud of their occupational and vocational programs. The future success of community colleges as training resources in occupational and vocational skills, however, will depend on the relevance of these programs to employers, length of time to train students, and relationships established by community colleges with the private sector. All of these variables are particularly important in a time of dwindling resources. Community colleges must take the initiative to become more closely involved

with the private sector in skill training. Such an involvement can prove effective in determining the specification of skills needed for employment potential of our graduates. There is a need to develop programs that are accelerated, open-entry, open-exit, modular in design and those reflective of the new era of technology. The Peralta Community College District is now involved in specialized training programs with the General Motors Corporation, the electronics and cable TV industry, and Wang word processing corporation, among others. In these programs there is a cooperative agreement between the District and the private sector to provide equipment and to share the teaching responsibility. The ability of community colleges to adapt program content and length of training to private sector needs will better allow them to represent themselves as viable training resources. As a member of the Private Industry Council in Oakland, California, I have seen on several occasions proprietary schools and community agencies collaborate with the private sector in obtaining funds for training programs already available at the community college. Our problem is one of adaptability and fast turn around. Money in the billions is being spent by the private sector in their own training programs; some of which could support training programs at community colleges. Urban community colleges cannot be responsive to the private sector until we become more adaptable to meeting its needs. A continuous relationship of community colleges with the private sector could not only make them more adaptable but also allow the opportunity to enter into contractual agreements for the delivery of training services that can help subsidize program costs, improve cost effectiveness, and assure employment for students upon completion. In an era of declining resources, it is imperative that partnerships with the private sector be established that are mutually beneficial, relevant to employer needs, cost effective, and employment oriented. Activities of this kind can do much to allay the inconclusive evidence reported about the efficacy of occupational and vocational training at the community college level.

Community colleges, if they are to be viable training resources must also be responsive to the era of high technology and rapid technological change, now, moreso than at any other time, not only in the training of persons for employment but in the use of the technology themselves. Not only must there be the partnership with the private sector to provide the training, there must be enough organizational flexibility to accommodate the rapidly and constantly changing needs for training and upgrading at the greatest reduced cost, particularly during times of high unemployment. It is estimated that 600,000 jobs are going unfilled in New York City because of a lack of persons with the technical skills to fill them. These rapid changes in the "high tech" area often dictate needs for training that defy many of our traditional approaches to instruction.

The employment need for high tech industries is such that they like to be located where there is a readily available labor pool. Available labor pools are usually found near training opportunities. For urban community colleges to take advantage of this rapidly growing industry, there will be the need in conjunction with the private sector to establish centers specifically dedicated to the development of a basic entry level labor pool readily available to the high technology industry that can develop a product which receives the sanction of the industry. Partnerships with the high technology industry to share teaching responsibility could be established as well as allow college instructors to work in the industry to acquire a "hands on" knowledge of skills where necessary. The partnership with the private sector reflected by these centers would also make it possible to maintain the most current equipment. Because of diminishing public resources, it will no longer be feasible to deliver self-contained distinct programs for all of the technologies involved. The instruction at such centers should reflect cluster-cores of educational and skill competencies that are basic to the several areas represented by the high technology fields. The cluster-core concept could prove to be efficient, expeditious, set its own standards, and attain its own evaluation of quality.

Community colleges of the future must also make use of high technology itself both in instruction and its administrative processes. It has been stated that in spite of all the reasons to the contrary, we can no longer allow ourselves to be more people intensive than is necessary to maintain the human quality required to accomplish our mission. In an area of rising personnel costs, increasing knowledge and greater expectations of educational institutions accompanied by reduced resources, it will be necessary to become more hardware intensive and technically innovative. Community colleges must also learn how to use computers, telecommunications, micro-computers and word processors, laser technology, and all other relevant new technologies to reach other communities, faciliate learning, and reduce the cost of administration by increased efficiency.

This period of austerity is teaching us that community colleges must develop organizational structures that are streamlined, cost effective, and efficient. Particularly in multi-college districts, we can ill afford to duplicate all administrative processes or programs at each college within easy commuting distance from each other. Program comprehensiveness for colleges in a district must be determined on the basis of logic and reason.

The era of advanced technology easily lends itself to reducing duplication and greater efficiency without a loss in effectiveness or quality. Very few community colleges have risen to the level of this challenge. It is appropriate here to state that beyond the problem of finances is also the problem of faculty and administrative inertia and some resistance to change.

As the need has been cited that a closer relationship with the private sector is necessary, there is also the need for a closer relationship with other public and governmental agencies. Community colleges should be regarded by all governmental agencies as the primary resource for paraprofessional education and skilled training in areas that do not require the baccalaureate degree. Governmental agencies should collaborate with community colleges in the development of new programs that are concerned with improving the welfare of people through education, training, and employment. In California, the governor is promoting a relationship of this type in a multi-million dollar program entitled, "Investment in People." If funded, community colleges are to be involved in several components. In the proposal, community college enrollment growth for 1982-83 has been specifically tied to the development of programs to train students for employment in high technology industries.

Similarly, urban community colleges should be aware of and be prepared to take advantage of governmental programs being espoused such as "enterprise zones" which relates to the partnership of government with industry in the preparation and training of persons indigenous to certain depressed geographical areas where there is high unemployment and a labor pool without the skills needed to qualify for employment. Again, in the implementation of "enterprise zone" concept, community colleges should be considered by government and the private sector as the primary resource for delivery of the necessary education and training. Community colleges must be adaptable to the training needs for this kind of program, and take the initiative to ensure that their involvement occurs.

Community service is one of the hallmarks of the community college movement. At a time when money is scarce at both ends of the spectrum, that is, in the pockets of the people who comprise our service area, and also at the funding sources; the question may be raised -- is a program of community service a legitimate responsibility and expense of the community college beyond its primary function of education and training? It is my feeling that community colleges should play a significant role in providing community service activities for their service areas. Formerly, the tax situation in California for

community colleges allowed community services programs to be offered at no additional cost to the community. This tax structure no longer exists. Community colleges are now forced to find other means, including fees, to provide these programs and services. Community colleges should serve the function of coordination and administration rather than subsidization. Community service programs must be financially self-sustaining or otherwise subsidized with due consideration given to the economic status of the service area. To eliminate totally a program of community service because of diminishing resources would further add to this deplorable state of affairs. It is during these times moreso than during times of prosperity that community service programs are needed. The establishment of a coordinating mechanism to work with local structures such as community based organizations, business and industry, governmental agencies, churches, and local schools, among others, should provide a creative mechanism to accommodate this need.

A serious initiative is being taken by community colleges to become more heavily involved in the establishment of foundations and auxiliary organizations as a means of attracting money to be used for special purposes that cannot be accommodated within the policies that govern budgeted general fund money. Foundations can be used as repositories of money donated by philanthropists or solicited by an active staff. They can also be used for student scholarships, support of programs in the fine arts, community service, humanitarian interests and contractual arrangements to provide instruction. The development of a foundation or auxiliary organizations should not be overlooked as a means of attracting or pursuing financial support from external sources that can be used to support community service programs and other activities. The task of finding a means of support for community service will not be easy but it can be accomplished.

Finally, community colleges should look upon this period of restrictive funding as a learning experience. It has not been a question of whether it was coming but when. Now, it is here and we are minimally prepared for it, nor can we document our case. Thousands of students have come through our doors. We preach a great gospel about what has happened to them. We know we have been good for all of them. But I do not know of a college that can document what has happened to most of them. Even attempts to form alumni associations most often fail. If we are good enough to exist and be supported by our citizens, we ought to be able to make a case for that support. The "walking with their feet" documentation is not acceptable to the private sector or the legislatures when there are no good answers to the difficult questions raised by them. I am particularly concerned

about what happens to our minority youth. If they are not transferring to four-year colleges, if they aren't prepared for work, where are they and what are they doing? These questions urban community colleges in particular must be able to answer. Community colleges need to establish a means of documenting what they do: their successes, their failures, the efficacy of their instructional methods and many other variables that will help tell their story to those who provide their support. Until they are able to do so, or until their constituents and students learn to appreciate them enough to take up their case with the powers that be, they will forever be under scrutiny, continually compared with the four-year institutions, and placed in the position of always justifying their reason for being.

I believe in community colleges and the role they play in the educational hierarchy and the service they provide to the community. I believe in their philosophy and their mission as I presently understand it. I know they have positively affected the lives of many students, particularly those who are minority. What is for certain is that community colleges are under fire -- particularly urban community colleges which enroll large numbers of minorities.

What I have attempted to do is point out some areas where community colleges need to make changes if they are going to continue to progress and be accessible to the kinds of students who need them the most. The need for some change has become more immediate because of this period of economic stress. However, the need for change has long been apparent. It may be good for community colleges that they are now being confronted with the reality of their mission for their own preservation. If community colleges believe in their mission, now is the time to make the changes necessary to ensure their continued progress. If we do not make the changes, they may be made for us and the outcome may not be properly described as progress.

Donald H. Godbold
Chancellor and District Superintendent
Peralta Community College District

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[1]Breneman, David W. and Nelson, Susan C.; Financing Community Colleges, An Economic Perspective; Brookings Institution, Washington, DC, 1981.

[2]Astin, Alexander W; Final Report of the Commission on the Higher Education of Minorities; Higher Education Research Institute, Inc.; Los Angeles, California, 1982.

> This report is part of an overall study titled Minorities in American Higher Education by Alexander W. Astin, which will be published in hard cover by Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, in May, 1982.

[3]Missions and Functions of the California Community Colleges, California Postsecondary Education Commission, Sacramento, California, 1981 (Dorothy Knoell principal researcher).

[4]American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, Washington, DC, February, 1982.

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